

would no doubt have corrected in a considerable degree the abuse from which we had suffered, and it was our policy to have waited for better times for a completer remedy for the evil.

But, Sir, the last head of dispute which I enumerated was made the chief and most important ground of complaint against the British government—I mean the searching American vessels for British seamen. The right claimed by England was to seize her own seamen on board our private vessels. The right to search a public vessel, or to seize an American sailor was never asserted by the government. The claim, however, which was insisted on, involved a point of equal interest and delicacy to both countries. There is nothing novel in the pretension, that a nation engaged in war had a right to recall her subjects from foreign countries or from foreign service to assist her in the war.

Every nation in Europe has claimed and exercised the right. Our government has not denied it; but the consequences of the manner of exercising it have formed the ground of our complaint. Has a belligerent a right to search a neutral vessel for her seamen? I should suppose not. This question between other nations is of small importance, between the United States and Britain, it is of great magnitude.

The sameness of manners, habits, language and appearance render it always difficult and sometimes impossible to distinguish between an English and an American sailor. If the right to search for British seamen were admitted, there would no longer be security for the American sailor: the right admitted, I have no doubt our navigation would be ruined. As an American therefore I would never concede the principle. Let us see however how the case stands in relation to Britain. Her navy is the shield of her salvation—whatever impairs its strength diminishes her power and safety. Tenacious as she has ever been of personal liberty at home, yet when men are wanted for her fleets, the habeas corpus sleeps. Her sailors are her right arm which withers as she is deprived of them. From the seductions of our maritime service she has every thing to dread. Our merchants can give her seamen a dollar for every shilling which she is able to afford them.

They shall be better fed, more gently treated, and exposed less to hardships and danger. Let them find a secure asylum on board our merchant ships, and how soon will the decks be thinned of the English ships of war. Which has the most at stake on this subject, England or America? I will not decide the question; but this is evident, that neither will ever unconditionally relinquish the principle for which she has contended. At the present crisis it was impossible for our government to expect the formal abandonment by the British government, of this right of search. What course then should they have pursued? They should have temporised on the point, as Britain was willing to do, and waited for a more propitious epoch, for the final arrangement of the dispute.

Your commissioners who negotiated the treaty, found that it was impracticable to obtain the cession of the principle for which

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